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ABSTRACT

To impress upon his audience the importance of education in the United States and the world, the author of this address discusses several aspects of current social reality that will be vitally affected by the extent of society's support of education. Among the topics on which the author touches are the high quality of the American political process, the need to reestablish education's place on the public agenda, the many ways in which neglecting education costs the nation, the character of education as a necessary and valuable investment, the time scale in terms of which education's impact must be measured, the value of learning how to unlearn faulty information, the importance of teaching love and patriotism, the successes of education, and the responsibility of today's administrators to protect education's interests. (PGD)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

# "DEFINING THE NEW REALITIES"

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AASA

February 28, 1982

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of School Administrators (114th, New Orleans, LA, February 26-March 1, 1982).

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"Defining the New Realities"
An address delivered by: Dr. Paul B. Salmon, Executive Director
American Association of School Administrators
February 28, 1982, AASA Convention in New Orleans

My friends, I'm so pleased to be here. I've looked forward to it for a long time. I am impressed that I am here because of the skill of a medical team that is unsurpassed, I believe, and they were that way because people supported schools, and teachers taught, and administrators administered, and the human resources were saved. I think we need to remember that as we do our jobs. We are the ones who make it all happen. We have an awesome responsibility.

This morning I am going to be talking to you on a subject that I believe is important to all of us. It may not fit the form of a really good speech because there's almost too much material. I hope you will remember those things that you believe are important.

Some time ago, I was in the great state of South Carolina, and while I was there Charlie Williams, the Chief State School Officer in South Carolina, gave me an idea that I have captured. I think it is so good that all of you ought to consider it. Charles gave the definition of a leader as one who can define reality in such a way that followers will understand it, accept it, and work for it. That's what I'm going to do with you this morning. I hope that I'm able to define some realities for you that will help you as you talk about the importance of education in the United States of America and in the world. I'll define these realities because I believe we must do that.

I believe education has been over-regulated, because in the 16,000 school systems in our nation there were some that didn't do what they should have done. Many of us were very good at doing very effectively that which we shouldn't have done.

Let me give you a story that illustrates this point. There was a fellow who got on a train in Niagara Falls. He wanted to get off in Buffalo. The train's destination was New York City. He told the porter, "I'm going to be in that upper berth; I sleep very very soundly. Now, the train gets to Buffalo at 3:00 o'clock. You have to get me off this train. I won't wake up easily and I'll argue with you but I want you to be sure to get me off." He gave the Porter a $20 bill. The next morning the fellow woke up just as the train pulled into Penn Station in New York City. He was absolutely livid. He rushed around until he found that porter and he excoriated him. After he had finished, he stomped away and another fellow came up to the porter and said, "I've never seen a human being so mistreated by another in my life. Why did you stand for it?" The guy said, "Well that really wasn't too bad. You should have seen what the fellow did who I put off at Buffalo."

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We're going to define some realities. The first reality I want you to consider is that we have in this nation the most effective political process that exists anywhere. It is the most responsive. It is the best there can be, but it requires that we all do something. It requires us to be sure that decision makers know exactly what effect the decisions they have made or are proposing to make will have on the schools. It is very important that each of you in this circumstance tell the decision makers, Congress, the President, your state legislatures and others exactly what their decisions are doing to you. Those things that are happening that are good, that make your job easier, that help the learners... congratulate them. Those that are doing damage to learners, get indignant, demand a change, and if you do, things will work out for all Americans. We're doing that now. We've seen a turnaround in Washington in the attitude toward education. I think that will continue if you will do that and if the people in your districts will do it.

The second reality is that, in this nation, to make the first reality work you must have a public agenda. The public agenda is what the public talks about, what the politicians listen to. The present administration has effectively removed education from the public agenda. You don't hear the administration talking about education as a way to further the interests of America. You don't hear them talking about human capital. They talk about physical capital; they talk about saving money; they talk about all of those things except the one that makes it all work. It's your responsibility to talk it up, to make sure that education gets back on the public agenda. We need to tell people how important it is. When we have that responsibility it is absolutely necessary that we define the realities. As you talk with constituents in your community, the Rotary Club, the Chamber of Commerce, individual parents, let them know education is the salvation of this country. Let them know that we have in our classrooms now the young people who will be serving as leaders in this nation between the years of 1993 and 2047. You say, Salmon, how did you get that? It takes thirty years to develop a citizen; that's how I got it. We must define realities as we give our talks, as we prepare our writings, and other communications in our communities.

The next reality that I want to define is the federal interest in education. In my judgment, we are now trying to decide whether we will be a confederation of states or a nation. The infrastructure of America is being torn asunder. It is absolutely ridiculous to me to think that we can send everything back to the states and not send much money. I believe that the roads and the ports and the distribution systems that are furnished by government, the dams and sewage disposal plants, all of those things are important to the growth of our economy. Those things are being cut. Right now we have so many bridges that won't work that United States Steel has to pay $1,200,000 every year in additional labor and transportation cost because they can't use the bridge that is near one of their plants. The cost of neglect in education is even greater.

Here is what I believe to be the federal interest. It is absolutely important that we have well educated young people who will serve in our defense forces. Right now the volunteer defense force seems to be working well. We need to look back into our school systems and make sure that as weapons become more sophisticated, as concepts of defense becomes more sophisticated, that the people involved are able to handle the sophisticated weaponry. I was struck recently by a statement made by the Secretary of the Navy. In the Washington Post he was quoted in two items on the same page. The first item said that, under the Reagan Administration, the Secretary expected to increase the size of the Navy 25% between now and 1985. In another article the same Secretary testifying before the Armed Services Committee of the House, said that without his civilian technicians he could only keep half of his F-15's flying. I wonder if somebody started shooting whether the civilians would be willing to work a seven day week. It seems to me that we need to "beef up" our efforts to train our people better. That's going to take considerable money and it's going to be a national question in which the federal government has a distinct interest.

Secondly, in welfare we decided a long time ago that we will treat properly people who are unable to take care of their physical needs. That doesn't mean they will live luxuriously. But their basic needs will be taken care of. And the Supreme Court of the United States has decided that no state has the right to put a person off, to have a residential requirement, for instance. If I am qualified for welfare I can go to your state, lay my qualification on your desk and you must give it to me. It seems to me that welfare must be fairly level so that one state can't dump its welfare load on another, and so that people who have bad luck or unfortunate circumstances can have their needs taken care of in a humane way.

The third is equality. Each of us is concerned about equality of education for our young people. We know that if we don't bring those people who have been discriminated against up to a proper level we will all suffer. We will suffer because those people will not turn out to be the productive people they could otherwise have become.

Full employment is the policy of this nation. That policy was adopted in the late forties and is still on the books. It certainly has an important impact on education. We must vocationally train and retrain our work force to assure that it is productive, to guarantee that it can compete.

And finally, maybe the most important is international competition. I'm so distressed by the fact that we have effectively lost our lead in the domestic optical business, the electronics business, the automobile business, and we are in the process of losing our lead in the computer business to Japan. Our people are not competing as they should and I believe that education is the tool that is being used to beat us. Last fall, I had an invitation to visit the

Anchorage Public School System in Anchorage, Alaska. Gene Davis is the superintendent there. On a Sunday, he graciously took Doris and me out to the Glacier. Then, over on the left hand side, he showed us a little school that Anchorage runs there and he showed us a ski area. The ski area had been purchased by a Japanese group. There were Japanese managers there and their children go to Gene's school. Gene told me they were fine parents. They liked the school; they liked the instruction. There was one thing they couldn't put up with though. On Saturdays, they leased the school from the Anchorage school system to teach mathemathics and Japanese language so that when the children returned to Japan they would be up-to-speed in mathematics and language. Their parents feared that if they just came along like our kids, they wouldn't be able to gain entrance into the fine universities which they realize are their entree into a lifelong position in top management. That says something to me. Japanese students go to school 225 days a year. How long do yours go to school? It says to me that we are in a competition that has a great deal to do with the quality of life in America. If we don't have the competitive initiative in highly technological industries and commerce, we will lose and our living standard will decline.

Citizen participation is another very important element in which we have a national interest. More and more decisions which impact upon our people are being made in Washington. It is important that our citizens be sophisticated enough to read, understand, analyze, and respond to those issues. The debate about whether there is a federal interest is one that must be resolved soon. If we had engaged in that debate, and if it had come out the way I believe it would have, we wouldn't see the President trying to trade off education, for instance, for food stamps. It seems to me that the United States of America has an interest in the level of education achieved by every citizen. It cannot tolerate a state that does not meet a reasonable standard of education for most of its citizens.

The next reality is a reality of human capital. I want to dwell on it a bit more because it's the heart of our operation. We are the ones who must develop the capital that will sustain this nation. Human capital is the only capital, really, because it's the thing that makes the machines run. Human resources and natural resources can be viewed in at least two ways. Natural resources that are developed contribute greatly to our way of life. They enrich us; they do great things for us. But if natural resources are not developed they just lie there. They don't cost us anything; they don't add anything to our life, but they don't cost us anything. On the other hand, humans who are developed add so much to our life. They make it possible for us to do everything we are able to accomplish as a nation. When they are undeveloped or underdeveloped they cost us and cost us and cost us until the day they die. There is no way to avoid the cost of developing human beings. You either pay it up front when you develop them or you pay for it the rest of their lives, while they're on your welfare rolls, or in your jails, or in low producing jobs.

The cost of educational neglect is so great that we as a nation cannot tolerate it. Think about the kind of nation we'd be living in if 300 years ago, or even when the Plessie Decision was made, we had decided that we would educate blacks to the same level as whites. Think of the money we would have generated. Think of the anguish we would have avoided. Think of the peace and tranquility we would have in our communities now because the productivity of those people who are still down, down, down would be up, up, up and they would be producing. There is no question in my mind that we would be in a clear leadership role. These underdeveloped people are a terrible burden that will not be cleared up for many a year.

We have some similar things on the agenda right now; I'd like to suggest them. Some of us have chafed over the way the 94-142 (Education for the Handicapped) laws have been thrust upon us. We should have been concerned because some requirements are quite unreasonable. On the other hand, every one of those people who we make self-sufficient is a burden that is relieved from our backs for the rest of that person's life. We must develop them. Even the great costs that some of us are sustaining now for individual students, if they can be made self-supporting, will pay out over time. We need to get into our heads the old American idea of investment. Education isn't an expense; it's an investment and when you make an investment you don't ask, "Is it too much?" You ask "Is it enough?" If it is an expenditure you ask if it is too much. If it's going to pay out in the future we ought to invest. The cost of neglect is high. For instance, undocumented aliens come into our country; we seem unable to keep them out. They come in in great numbers, and the federal government is concerned about it. They wring their hands but that's about it. They're here. I would suggest that we may not like it and it may be a terrible burden to us, but we must educate those newcomers to our country. This is one thing that Washington ought to do clearly. Our federal government ought to provide money to educate those people, because through the government's negligence they are allowed to come here. In the meantime, unless we can figure a way to get those people out of our country so that they don't become a burden to us, our self interest requires us to give them education.

The learning society is the next reality. We are a learning society and we must learn and learn and learn. I'm in my sixth career since graduating from Whittier College as an elementary teacher. In six different positions I've made my livelihood from full time. I was able to perform in each one of those positions because I had an education that gave me flexibility. I could read blueprints. I could calculate. And, as a result, I had flexibility in the labor force, and I am a productive person. We need to make sure all of our people are given that same opportunity.

The idea of lead time. In our schools right now we have the leadership of our country in the years ahead. I have chosen to say that a person is not very influential in American society until he or she is 30 years old. We have the 20-30 Clubs; we have the Junior

Chambers of Commerce for all of us who are under 30. Once we become 30, we are allowed to participate actively. You can't become a member of the Senate until you are 30. When you are 30 you get on stage and you stay on stage until you are 70. I used to say 65 before Mr. Reagan became President. You are influential between the time you are 30 and 70, those are the people who make the decisions that bind us all. We need to remember that those people who are in our schools today will be entering this leadership level beginning in 1993-1994. That's twelve years from now when today's eighteen-year-old seniors become 30. And then, thirteen years beyond that in 2007 the kindergarteners will be 30 and the seniors will have moved on to the point where they're in the middle of the bracket, the most influential position. They go across life's stage, making their decisions on how things will be between 1994 and 2047. Some of the Presidents of the United States during the period are in our classrooms now, most of the Members of Congress, the judges, the crooks they'll put in jail.... they are all there. How that time turns out will depend on what we do now. The attitude that we're able to instill into young people about the seriousness of life, freedom, the ability to communicate with one another, and to get joint action that is in the common interest, the responsibility to sacrifice -- all of this is so important for us to keep in mind because lead time can make us unaware of our effect on the future. Let me give you an example. Some of you not long ago may have seen me on NBC news. I was talking about the test scores that the Department of Defense had developed in its study of recruits age 17-23. Those test scores showed that blacks who were given this military proficiency test scored 24 points and that whites scored 56. Some people were saying that's good. I don't think it's good. It says to me that these young people overcame great odds even to achieve that level because they did not have the benefit of Title I when they were in school. We now have clear evidence that under Title I we can raise the reading scores of blacks to the level of whites. We now know that in a few years the students that will come out of that program will be available as recruits. They'll be much better. The oldest of these young people who were measured this time started school in 1962 and the youngest went in about 1968. Title I didn't function during those years. It was enacted in '65. I know that. I know that in my district I got the program but we didn't know what to do with it for the first four or five years. We didn't get our act together until about 1970. Recently, Title I has become a very effective program that is now threatened with a 50% cut. Does that make any sense? Not to me. I think we will be wasting human resources and we will rue the day that we lost them.

Education for the future. How do we look toward the years 1994 through 2047 and decide how we are going to teach young folks to live during those times. We can't even visualize life then. I graduated from high school in 1937. 1937 was such a bad time. The depression was so bad that my family at one time got some money together, 15¢ apiece. We were going to the show and we didn't know

what time the show started. So my mother said," I'll go next door and we'll borrow the neighbors telephone. I'll call the theater and find out when the next show starts." When she asked the manager, he answered, "When can you come?" Hitchhikers could go either way on the highway in those days. Things were really tight. It was impossible to visualize in 1937 when I got out of high school what life would be now. We didn't have jet planes; we didn't have transistors; we didn't have computers; we didn't have frozen foods; we didn't have anything. Oh yes we did! We had clean air. We didn't have pornography in our theaters and things of that sort. The nearest I can remember was something called "Spicey Detective." But the point is that we couldn't visualize at all the kind of life that we have today.

Here are some additional realities. Learning styles. Students ought to know the technology of learning. They ought to learn and learn and learn with great proficiency. The objective should be to learn how to learn. And then they also have to learn how to unlearn. We learn many things that are wrong. Let me enumerate some for you that I learned and have had to throw out of my mind since then. The stereotypes of the blacks, the Jews and the Catholics were wrong, all wrong. The most dramatic thing that I can remember was that I learned when I was a young man in California that the Japanese were very proficient at producing material that was sleezy, a good imitation but it wouldn't work long. I was in the Navy air arm. There, I came into contact firsthand with a Zero airplane. That airplane was not sleezy. It worked. It shot the tail off us and if we had not had self-sealing gas tanks the war might even have been different. Japan was a nation that had the capability of turning out high quality, high level production and they gave us a heck of a tussle. We need to unlearn some things.

We need to teach folks how to love. Now I'm talking about learning agape' love. Let me define it. Love is the willingness to sacrifice yourself that another may have life. We need to teach that for family. Families are called upon to sacrifice. We've forgotten that. I was distressed awhile back when I read that parents now are not as willing to sacrifice as in the past and I suspected that might be the case. Because in the depression, when I was in school, the one thing we had were schools, and they were good schools. Parents saw that education was a way out of that thing. In 1937, as I said, I graduated from high school and I could have gone to any public higher educational institution in California, including the University of California, UCLA or any state college or community college for no tuition. I went to a community college. It cost me $1.75 a semester, an investment in education that paid richly for that state which now claims that it has the seventh highest gross national product of any nation in the world. We need to teach our young people to learn, that sacrifice is the way humans advance themselves and those whom they love. We should teach it in connection with patriotism. Patriotism has been battered a great deal in the past because of the unequal treatment that some of our

people have sustained. But I suggest that it has a two-part definition. The first part is a fervent love of country. The second is a diligent working for its welfare. If you take that second one you can sacrifice for your country. Paying an honest tax bill is a patriotic act. Driving 55 miles an hour is a patriotic act. Developing your intellect is a patriotic act. We need to get that across to our young people.

A reality now that I'll leave with you is that we, for the first time in a large number of years, have good news to tell. I was a superintendent beginning in 1947 and continuing until 1971. It's a job that I loved. It's the greatest job in the world and it has the greatest influence on the most important element of the future.

In 1964, we were engaged in confrontation politics in schools. I remember in the early sixties that my board would hold a meeting and the budget would be heard. The president of the board had a speech that he gave each time. He'd say, "Here we are adopting a budget of $4 million and nobody's here." By '64 he couldn't say that any longer. We had more people there than we had room for, and everyone of them wanted to talk. We began to gather the fruits of the instructional programs of schools; we had taught people that if those who govern them were not doing as they wished, they had the right to petition. That's what's happened all over America, at every level. That's the reason you have people coming to your school boards. They have desires and they want you to represent them. It makes for a livelier school board meeting; it makes superintendents more tired. But it makes for a better country. While that was going on, we had a demand in the mid-sixties for a relevant education, for courses that we had never heard of, and we put them in without much thought. We had minority history courses. We had in one of the school districts where I was an administrator, sports English, whatever that is. We taught a great number of things that watered down the curriculum, and that didn't turn up on the tests that we gave and test scores went down. In 1975, we had other people coming back saying, "We want standards," and we've given them standards and the news is good now. Test scores are up. The National Assessment of Educational Progress shows that our ability to teach minorities has been improved greatly. We know the way a school can be made effective, don't we? For the first time we've identified those elements that will virtually guarantee quality education and the advancement of learning: a good principal; an evaluation with a quick feedback loop; teachers who care and have high expectations and standards; discipline; parental support. We know those things now. We know them and we ought to be putting them into effect. We're the educators; we can do anything. We can make the students into Jack the Ripper or a person who can do a heart operation like the one performed on me. We can make them into virtually anything. The resources that we get will determine to a great degree how effective we are in making them into American citizens.

The last reality I want to give you is that <u>we are the leaders in education</u>. When I was a young fellow I always had my mother there, or my father, or my teacher. When I got into the school business I always had the principal, the assistant superintendent, the superintendent, the board. When I got into the superintendency, I always had the state superintendent. I had somebody else who, if I dropped the ball, would pick it up. But that isn't available anymore. You and I are the leaders. We're the leaders of education. We'll put it back on the agenda or it won't get on the agenda. Each of us has a responsibility to do that and we can do it. I suggest three things for you to do when you get home. First, go back with a firm conviction that learning can be improved forever...., that we never "arrive." Several weeks ago I was watching a basketball game in the Atlantic Coast Coference. I love that one; that's where I live (great teams in that Conference), and this particular evening the folks on television were talking about how basketball had been improved at the University of Maryland. They were showing the fast photography that was used to watch people dribble and shoot and do all of these other things. And then the analysis came through and the good physical education people taught players how to change little things that made them great. You can remember when it was thought that nobody could run the mile in 4 minutes and Roger Bannister did that. We're 10 full seconds under the 4 minute mile now and it will go down even further. When I was a kid in high school, the 100 yard dash world record was run by Charles Paddock, fastest human in the world, in 9.4. High school kids are running 9.4 now. We can improve learning and we ought to undertake that when we go home from this meeting, to redouble our efforts no matter how far we've gone.

Second, we need to apply in those schools under our guidance the things we know will make them effective. We need to be sure that we have principals in those schools who can be educational leaders. If they aren't educational leaders they need to be given the help that will enable them to become educational leaders, and if they can't learn, they need to be removed. The shadow of an administrator that is incompetent is too broad to tolerate. You and I need to keep ourselves abreast, too. We need to be up there with the best of them.

The third thing you need to do is to speak out. If you believe in some of these realities, speak out on them. Speak out on every occasion: do it orally; do it in writing; do it by example. Let the people know that their salvation will be found in education and that the schools will be a major element in that.

I was raised in Whittier, California. There weren't a lot of things that happened in Whittier. It was a moral community. It was so moral that the theaters were built outside the city limits... the bowling alley, too. Everybody in town knew everybody's kids, and you just really couldn't do anything in Whittier without your mother knowing it before you got home. One of the things that happened in

Whittier, California, for anybody who lived there was that you became very familiar with that old abolitionist, John Greenleaf Whittier. He wrote a poem for us today. He was a fiery abolitionist and he wrote this poem back then, but it applies to us today.

"Where's the manly spirit of the true hearted and unshackled gone?
Sons of old free men, did we inherit but their name alone?
Is the old pilgrim's fire quenched within us,
Stoops so low the proud manhood of our soul that mammon's lure or party wile can win us to silence now,
Now when our land to the very edge of ruin is verging?
In God's name, speak while there's time.
When the padlocks for our lips are forging, silence is a crime."